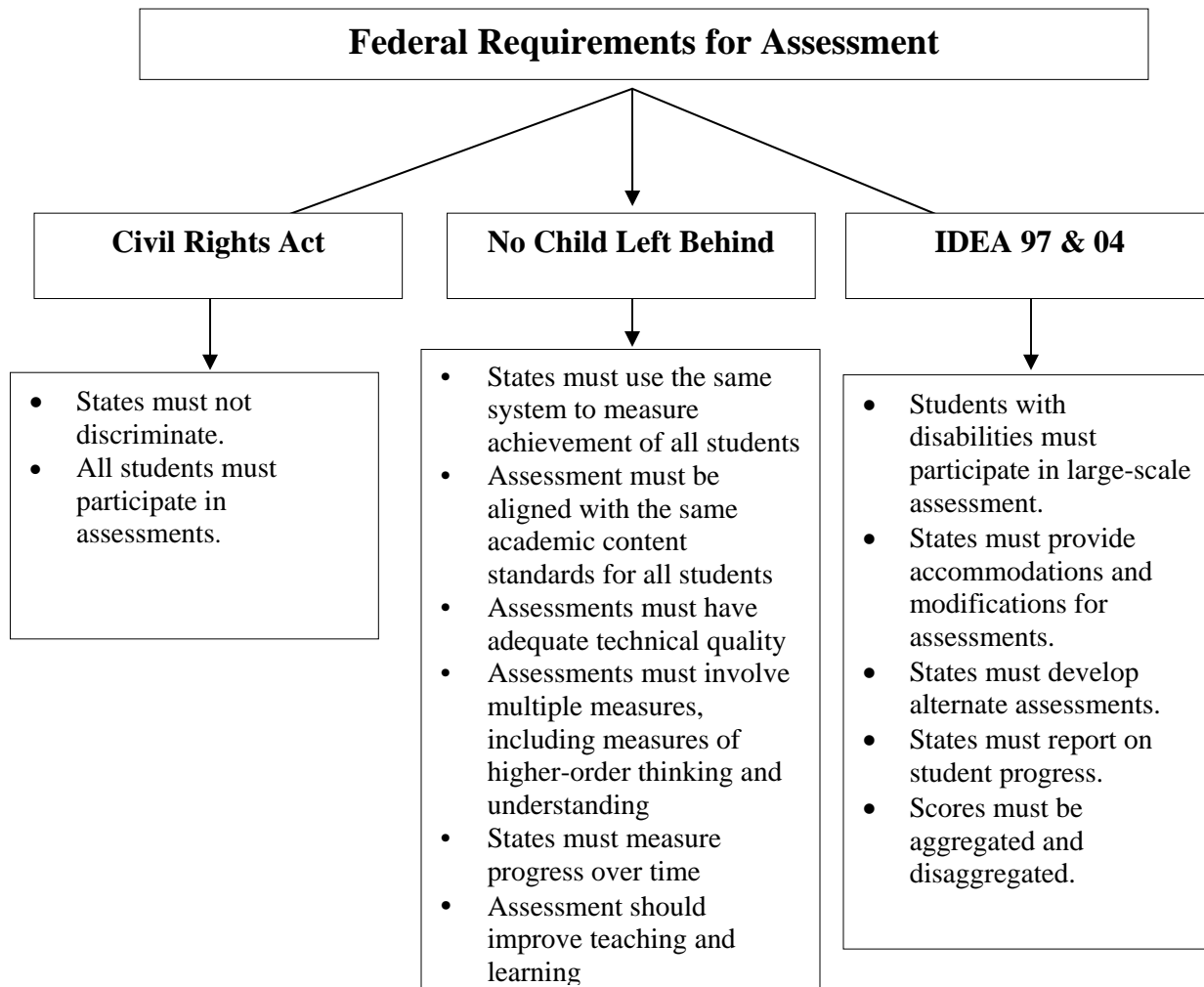


Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 and 2004, as well as the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), require that all students with disabilities, even those with the most severe disabilities, participate in state and district assessment programs. In Iowa, the majority of students with disabilities currently participate in district-wide assessments by taking the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills/Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITBS/ITED) or other district-wide assessments, with or without accommodations. For the few students with disabilities who are unable to participate in these assessments due to the severity of their disability, an alternate assessment process must be in place. The Iowa Department of Education, along with an advisory committee composed of educators, parents and administrators from across the state, has developed an alternate assessment process based on local standards.



The following guiding principles were used by the task force to guide its work:

We believe that the purpose of ALL student assessment should be

1. to improve teaching and learning;
2. to provide information to each educational agency's accountability and improvement planning process which will assist the SEA, AEAs, and LEAs in determining the health of the educational system; and
3. to fulfill federal, state, AEA, and LEA accountability and reporting requirements. (see the comparison of No Child Left Behind and IDEA 97, Appendix A)

We believe that

1. alternate assessment must be aligned with a school or school district's standards and benchmarks and that this alignment will lead to increased access to the general curriculum and higher expectations for all students;
2. alternate assessment is only intended for students with the most severe disabilities; and
3. individual student needs drive the decision(s) on how each child will participate in an agency's system.

For further information and updates re: policy and procedures, be sure to visit the Iowa Department of Education's (IDE) web site at <http://www.state.ia.us/educate>.

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